

**Opening Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley**  
**"Graying of Nations III: Productive Aging Around the World"**

It is an honor for me today to have the Senate Special Committee on Aging hold this important hearing on the international trend of increased life expectancy. At the request of Senator Glenn, a participant in the Graying of Nations hearings held in 1977 and 1985, I agreed to bring this issue before the committee to raise public awareness. I am pleased to hold this hearing and to have my colleague, Senator Glenn, chair this special event.

I am honored to have such a distinguished group of witnesses here today, many of whom have traveled great distances to be here. It is especially nice to see Dr. Forette, who testified at the Graying of Nations II, and Doctors Butler and Svanborg who testified at both the Graying of Nations I and II. I want to welcome all the witnesses here today and to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to appear before the committee.

As many of you know, the United Nations Year of the Older Person begins in October. I hope today's hearing will contribute to greater public awareness about the opportunities that increased life expectancy creates. I am anxious to learn more about the programs, policies and research that the United States and countries around the world have used to promote active aging. Providing opportunities for older persons to remain active participants in society will become increasingly important as life expectancy rises around the globe. In 1950, the average life expectancy was 47; it has since risen to 66. In addition to the increases in life expectancies around the world, many nations are also facing a dramatic demographic shift as a result of the aging of the Baby Boomers.

Too often, policy makers talk about the problems or challenges that the aging of the population creates. I am pleased to have an opportunity today to focus on the opportunities for both individuals and society as a whole that this demographic shift presents. Increases in longevity have outpaced disability rates. People are living longer because they are healthier. It is essential that we encourage the participation of older people in community life.

Today's hearing will examine the global implications of increased life expectancy. Witnesses will discuss the important paid and unpaid contributions older persons make to family and civic life and highlight international programs, policies and research that encourage and help define active roles for seniors. We hope to gain more insight about these new approaches from the experts here today.